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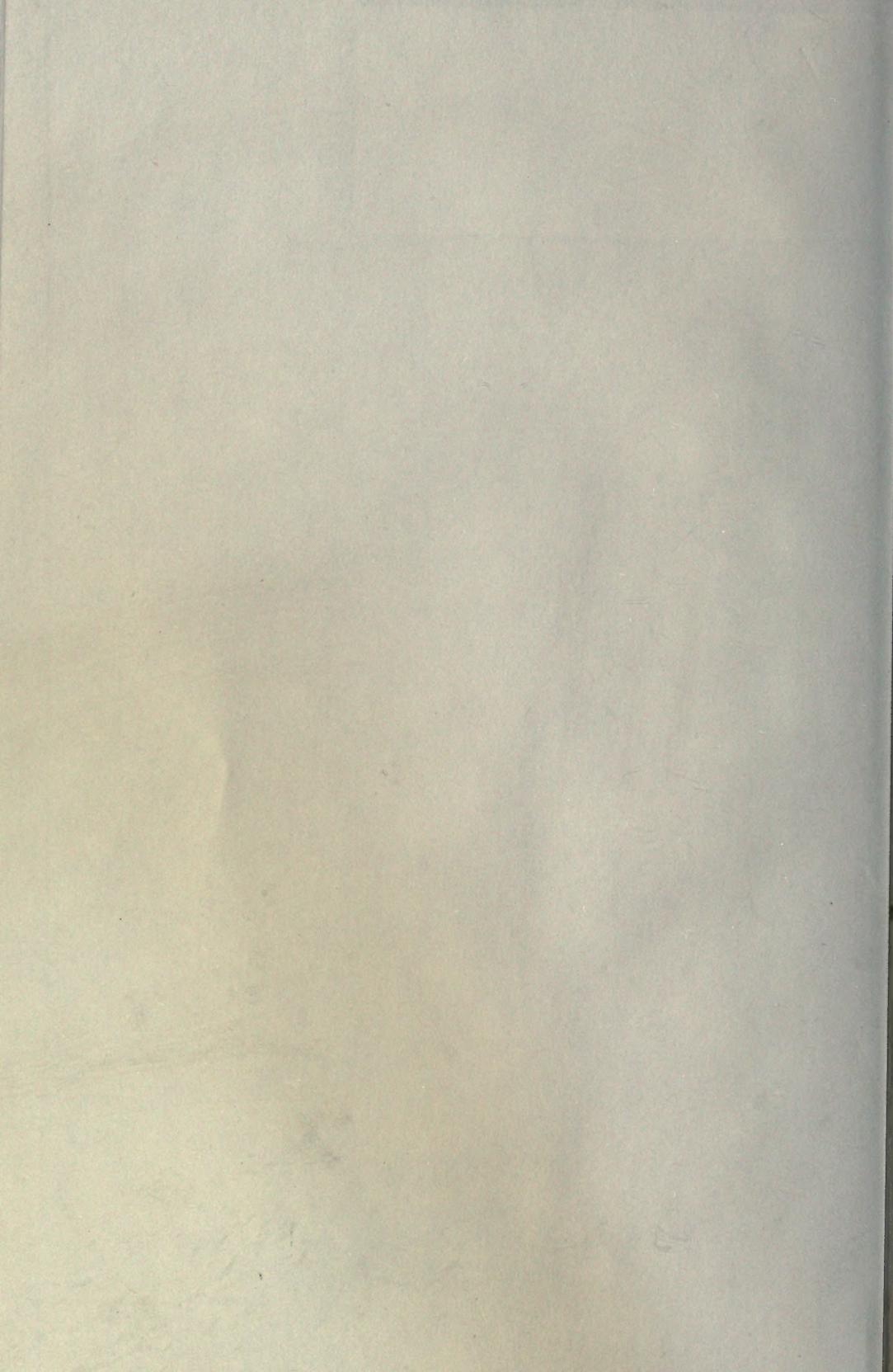
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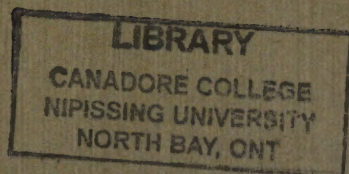
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Kapuskasing—An Historical Sketch

BY

WATSON KIRKCONNELL

The Jackson Press, Kingston



**BULLETIN OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF HISTORY AND
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KAPUSKASING*—AN HISTORICAL SKETCH.

TWO decades ago, at the beginning of the twentieth century, even Canadians knew the vast hinterland to the north of Old Ontario and Quebec only as a limitless and unprofitable wilderness. From Manitoba east to Labrador, stretching two thousand miles in length and various hundreds in width, stood the battered granite foundations of the oldest mountain range in the world, hills already incomprehensibly ancient when the Rockies, Alps and Himalayas were first upheaved in Tertiary times, yet still formidable enough to act as a great natural barrier. Four hundred miles north of the C. P. R. the Hudson's Bay Company factors were still bartering with Crees and Ojibways on the shores of a great inland sea. What lay between was held to be a primeval chaos of barren rock, a veritable abomination of desolation.

In 1902 the Ontario Government began to build the Temiskaming and Northern Ontario Railway, an exploration road striking almost due north into the hills above North Bay. In 1903 the railway-builders uncovered silver deposits at Cobalt, now perhaps the richest silver-mining centre in the world, and the Canadian people awoke suddenly to the potentialities of this despised wilderness. A small but rich area of farm land was next found in the Lake Temiskaming basin further north, and under a liberal colonization policy agricultural development almost kept pace with mining operations. North of Lake Temiskaming, the railroad slashed its way into the hills once more, drawn on by the discovery of immense gold deposits near Swastika and Porcupine. Meanwhile the Laurier government had begun in 1905 to build the National Transcontinental from Moncton to Prince Rupert. This new road crossed Ontario far to the north of any previous settlement, and disclosed for the first time, north of the rocky height of land, an immense tract of millions of acres of arable land, known thereafter as the Great Clay Belt.

In early post-glacial times, as the last Labradorian ice-sheet was creeping back to perish in Ungava, this district was covered with an enormous sheet of fresh water, now referred

*NOTE—The current pronunciation is Kap-us-kay'-sing. The original Indian pronunciation was Ka-puss'kah-sing.

to as Lake Ojibway, which extended from the Abitibi region west to a point north of the present Lake Nipigon, of about the same length as Lake Superior, and north from the height of land to the edge of the glacier. On the floor of this huge lake there were laid down deep layers of silt, sand and clay, masking the natural undulations of the glacial drift and pre-Cambrian rock surface and producing a great under-water plain. After some centuries of existence, Lake Ojibway disappeared, and the present Clay Belt gradually took form—a vast, forested steppe, as yet imperfectly drained by a system of wide, meandering rivers which have not dissected the underlying rock ridges sufficiently to relieve their basins, and have thus left many large areas of oozy muskeg entirely without drainage.

This region endures a very different climate from Southern Ontario, and its flora and fauna vary accordingly. Lying within the path of the broad cyclonic disturbances that traverse North America from the south-west, it has an ample rainfall, and is therefore covered everywhere with forest. The menace of winter is felt throughout the greater part of the year, and in some years frost is recorded in every month without exception. The winter temperature often drops to between 50° and 60° below zero, and the ground freezes to a depth of twelve feet or more, sometimes never thawing out completely during the entire summer. As a result, only such plant species as are exceedingly tolerant of cold have succeeded, and even these forms are dwarfed and stunted. Black or bog spruce, a puny, starveling tree, darkens the horizon in every direction, except where occasional low ridges are brightened with poplars and birches. The pines, maples, oaks and beeches of Old Ontario have died out far to the south and are nowhere to be seen. Wild flowers have dwindled in variety and lost in showiness; trilliums and bellworts have yielded to the small-flowered anemone and the Lake Mistassini primrose; the Showy Orchis is replaced by the Calypso. More than a hundred species of birds have been recorded here, however, and old friends like the robin and the veery thrush nest in this wilderness. Better still, the moose and black bear crash through its thickets and pike and pickerel swarm in its streams. It is a hunters' paradise, and as yet not overcrowded with saints.

This was the district which the civil engineers had now revealed to the world, as the T. & N. O. descended northward into it from the height of land and the Transcontinental cut across it from the Quebec hills on the east. Fifty miles north of the last Ontario uplands, the two roads formed a junction-point, named after the late Hon. Frank Cochrane, and here, in the heart of the Clay Belt, settlements began to spring up.

The Beginnings of Kapuskasing

The present village of Kapuskasing marks the intersection, seventy miles west of Cochrane, of the Transcontinental Railway and the Kapuskasing River, a substantial tributary of the Mattagami. James Bay is 120 miles to the north, Winnipeg 706 miles to the west, and Quebec City a like distance to the east. In the autumn of 1914 this section of the railroad was still in the hands of the contractors, the J. B. O'Brien Company, of Renfrew, and the only local signs of man were the empty station-house (known until 1917 as Macpherson), the unused track and siding, and four roofless shacks of a deserted construction camp on the river bank.

About this time the federal Department of Agriculture appealed to the Ontario Government for a grant of land in the Clay Belt whereon to establish an Experimental Farm for testing the agricultural possibilities of the country. After some investigation, the Federal Government was deeded a block of 1,280 acres at Kapuskasing, just west of the river and abutting on the south side of the Transcontinental right of way for about two miles. This land was all tillable and comparatively level except for a gentle slope towards the river and a few shallow coulees. It was, however, still covered with impenetrable forests of spruce, and to clear the way for cultivation the Minister of Agriculture applied, in the autumn of 1914, to the newly-formed Department of Internment Operations for a contingent of prisoners of war who might do the pioneering.

On December 14, 1914, Captain W. E. Swaine and 11 men of the 14th Regiment, Kingston, arrived at the desolate station with a party of 56 Ruthenians from Fort Henry. As New Ontario lay within the jurisdiction of Military District No. 2, the permanent garrison was supplied from Toronto. These relief-

ing troops arrived on Christmas Day, and Captain Swaine returned to Kingston.

The Slavic Phase of Kapuskasing Camp

The first Commandant of the new post was Major F. F. Clarke, of the 12th York Rangers, Toronto. An engineer by profession, he had been engaged on construction work on the C. N. R. for several years previous to the war, and with such experience was able to prosecute vigorously the work of settlement.

Throughout the winter the thermometer sported daily between 40° and 60° below zero. Snow lay six feet deep on the level. The wilderness of spruce stood everywhere, infinite and obdurate. The hospital records showed a tragic list of heads bruised by falling trees and of hands and feet chopped and frozen. Yet the work went briskly forward. Two bunk-houses were completed and occupied on January 5, 1915, and others followed in rapid succession. These bunk-houses were frame buildings, 75 feet long, 28 feet wide, and 22 feet high, with a tar-papered exterior, two windows in each end, a ventilator in the roof, and a double tier of bunks along each wall. By the end of February, 1915, six bunk-houses had been completed and the sills for four more laid; three troops' barracks had been put up, as well as a hospital, a Y. M. C. A. building, a bakery, and a canteen and a supply depot abutting conveniently on the railway siding; while in addition 100 acres of land had been cleared, 800 cords of pulpwood cut, and 400,000 feet of sawlogs taken out.

In July, branch camps were planted out four miles east, two miles west, and at the confluence of the Kapuskasing and Woman rivers, four miles south. At this last post, much valuable spruce was taken out and floated down to Kapuskasing. The Woman River camp was closed permanently in November, 1915, but the other two outlying camps persisted until the following spring, when they were finally abandoned. Nearer at hand, the prisoners slashed and stumped roads around and across a block of land six miles long by two wide, and also slashed a broad clearing of some 600 acres on the farm property west of the camp.

The population of the station had meanwhile grown from

almost incessant immigration until, at the end of a year, Major Clarke ruled over 1,259 aliens and 256 troops. The great majority of the prisoners were Slovaks, Ruthenians, and Poles. There were also a hundred Turks, a few Bulgars, a Magyar or two, and a handful of genuine Austrians. Ignorant, sullen, inert, the mass of these interns were the very incarnation of passive resistance. They worked because they were compelled, and they exerted themselves as little as possible, though by dawdling steadily they accomplished much through sheer force of numbers. Early each morning they would be told off into gangs of a score each and would march off languidly to the bush in Indian file, with one armed sentry in rear and a drowsy Slav in front setting the pace in a slow, lurching shuffle. Fortunately for those in local authority, there prevailed among all these hundreds of thick heads a strange belief that for every day of their captivity they would receive at the close of the war an indemnity of five dollars wrung from Canada by a victorious Austria. Under the hypnosis of this pleasing dream, they became greatly attached to the camp, and had so little desire to leave it that guarding them was something of a sinecure.

Major Clarke received a Lieutenant-Colonelcy in the 127th Battalion, C. E. F., in January, 1916, and his place was taken by Major G. C. Royce, of the Queen's Own Rifles, Toronto.

The ensuing summer visited the whole north country with a scourge of forest fires. The town of Matheson was destroyed, and many scores of persons perished in its vicinity. Cochrane, too, was wiped out, but with smaller loss of life. The Transcontinental was ablaze from Graham to Parent, and Kapuskasing was not unvisited. All day long on Saturday, July 29, the entire population fought frantically to save the camp, and in the end succeeded. It was an anxious time, but no lives were lost. Indeed, Kapuskasing was able to offer very real help to Cochrane by taking down food and clothing to her starving and destitute survivors long before relief could be brought in from the south over the flame-swept rails of the T. & N. O. Railway.

Early in July, Major Royce had received the command of the 255th Battalion, C.E.F. His successor was Lieut.-Colonel J. R. Rodden, of the 3rd Victoria Rifles, Montreal.

About this time, the Government concluded that the Slavic interns were harmless, and decided to parole them to work for the Dominion Steel Corporation and other big manufacturers. In a few months over 1,300 prisoners were released from Kapuskasing, and by May 1, 1917, only some threescore of the halt, maimed and blind were left in camp.

The Olympians, meanwhile, were planning to close Fort Henry Internment Station at Kingston, and transfer its German population to the backwoods. For the safe custody of these more dangerous boarders it was decided to surround the Kapuskasing prisoners' quarters with two tall fences of barbed wire, some six feet apart, thus creating a large and tolerably secure "compound." It became the task of Lt.-Colonel Rodden and his troops to rush this work so that the transfer could be made as soon as possible. A phenomenal blizzard early in April halted all progress for a time, but by May 5th, when the 400 immigrants from Kingston arrived, the new barriers were practically complete.

A Season of Unrest

Lieut.-Colonel W. E. Date, of the 17th Hussars, Montreal, had been the last Commandant at Fort Henry, and now succeeded Lieut.-Colonel Rodden at Kapuskasing. The early months of his rule were marked by two main currents of unrest, each reaching a culmination and a settlement. The first was an attempt by the prisoners to defeat the Commandant and defy his authority; the second was a like attempt by certain officers and troops to overthrow his administration. The issue with the prisoners was fought out in the autumn of 1917; battle with the military malcontents was not joined until the end of the year.

During the weeks following his arrival, a strict but not intolerable regimen was imposed upon the Compound. Early rising and stated hours of exercise were insisted on. Bunks, bunk-houses and kitchens had to be immaculate. All but a minimum of clothing for each prisoner was locked away. Personal cleanliness was compulsory. Sanitation received unceasing attention.

But an eloquent minority among the Germans became restive under this detailed ordering of their daily lives, and when,

in August, 1917, the Commandant wished to begin serious work in the bush and the accumulation of the next winter's wood supply, these agitators proclaimed a strike and demanded a return to Fort Henry. The well-disposed prisoners formed a workers' faction in opposition, but their leaders were assaulted and stabbed by the extremists, and all resistance to the latter faded out.

The authorities at Ottawa refused to permit coercion, and their wishes of course prevailed. For three months the prisoners sulked and loafed, while the garrison fumed in enforced impotence. Winter set in at last and the rebels began to weaken. Their refusal to work now meant a miserable life in frozen quarters. Unconditional surrender was at hand, when a message came to the prisoners from the German Foreign Office instructing them to go to work. At the same time, the Minister of Justice offered to double their wages. Overjoyed at an excuse that savoured of victory, they gave in at once and the strike was over.

Those in local authority were indignant over the additional wage, but the Justice Department was resolved on clemency. And indeed, although this concession was magnified greatly by the prisoners and paraded offensively as a case of governmental surrender, the lessons of the long, dreary autumn were not forgotten, and there was never again any attempt by the Compound to question or defy authority.

However, the prisoners had scarcely capitulated when the Commandant became aware of mutinous plottings among the troops of the station. The chief cause of this unrest was the inauguration of a far stricter régime than had ever been known before. For the new administration ruled with an iron hand. Many improvements were made, barracks renovated and sanitation bettered, but all this was forgotten in the general curtailment of liberty and extermination of license. The importation of whisky, formerly carried on openly at the rate of thirty cases per month, was stamped out. All slackness in discipline was given stern correction. And several unsuitable members of the garrison were returned to civil life.

Enmity against the Commandant came to a head in December, 1917. The federal elections were impending, and a secret statement of grievances was presented to two of our

most professional politicians. The latter wrote to the Minister of Justice and urged, with like secrecy, that Lieut.-Colonel Date be summarily dismissed. However, the plot miscarried and an investigation was brought on, in which the camp administration was upheld. This ended all unrest.

The Advent of the Veterans' Settlement

Meanwhile the politicians had been formulating plans whose fruition was to make Kapuskasing a name of interest in other ways. In February, 1917, the Ontario government had inaugurated a Land Settlement Scheme which aimed at placing large numbers of returned men on the lands of the Crown in Northern Ontario. A block of six townships was set aside for use in this connexion, namely: O'Brien (in which Kapuskasing is situated), Owens, Williamson, Idington, Cumming, and Shakleton, located sixty to seventy miles west of Cochrane along the Transcontinental. These townships were surveyed into lots containing 100 acres each instead of the ordinary homestead quarter-section, thus providing a field for over three thousand prospective settlers.

The administration of the scheme was worked out carefully but generously. Applications were to be listed in the Department of Lands, Forests and Mines, and from time to time the men would be called up in parties of from twenty to forty for examination. If found physically fit and approved as eligible by a select committee, they would be sent forward to a nuclear colony at Kapuskasing. There they would be temporarily housed and boarded, and would proceed to clear and fit for the plough ten acres on the front of each 100-acre lot. One lot was to be assigned to each prospective settler. The land itself was a free grant from the Crown, and during the period in which the men were engaged in clearing the ten acres on each lot they were to be paid either by the hour or by the acre. Many settlers earned from \$1,200 to \$1,500 in the preparation of their own portion of land. The government also undertook to erect on each lot a substantial frame house costing from \$500 to \$700. Of this expense, \$150 was to be borne by the government and the balance by the settler. Horses, farm implements, wagons and sleighs were to be available for free bor-

rowing, and cash loans granted to the extent of \$500 per man.

In June, 1917, a pioneer party of twenty-four men was sent to the Monteith Experimental Farm to receive instruction in land-clearing and agriculture. On July 13, 1917, four of these men, in charge of Major T. L. Kennedy, of Dixie, Ontario, left Monteith and settled on the east bank of the Kapuskasing River, just opposite the internment camp and south of the Transcontinental. The remaining twenty of the original pioneer party arrived in Kapuskasing on July 25th.

As the land on which they now proceeded to found a colony had been slashed by prisoners of war in 1915 and burned over in 1916, their work was somewhat lightened. Those in charge planned to erect a small village in which settlers and their families could be housed while their individual farms were being set in order. For the first few weeks the colonizers sojourned in tents, but work was pushed vigorously, and when the Duke of Devonshire made a visit of inspection in mid-September, he found some fifteen frame cottages, all completed and occupied, fronting on a quarter-mile of graded road.

Growth of the Federal Farm

Nor had the Federal Experimental Farm—the original cause of the internment camp's establishment—been neglected throughout these years. The Foreman-Manager since its inception had been Mr. Smith Ballantyne, a well-known backwoodsman, and the development of his area was accomplished by gangs of prisoners supervised by himself and a small staff of Canadian helpers. Clearing operations had been carried on steadily and the soil revealed as a rich, heavy clay loam with a top soil of black muck. By the spring of 1917, 700 acres had been slashed over and 250 acres of this cleared and stumped ready for cultivation. During the next twelve months another 128 acres were slashed and 100 more acres cleared and ploughed ready for the 1918 crop.

The agricultural value of the farm was still, however, rather uncertain. In 1915 and 1916 a few acres of garden truck had done tolerably well.

But in 1917, the first year of extensive planting, results were very discouraging. The preceding winter had been unusually severe, and was followed by a long, late spring. The

river was frozen over until late in May, and incessant rainfall flooded the fields and delayed the completion of seeding until June 15th. Then rain fell five days out of seven from June to November, and all crops grew very slowly. On August 29th a heavy frost destroyed all the vegetables, and on September 6th a killing frost ruined all the grain and cereals, which were only in the milk stage at that late date. The root crops, too, were an ignominious failure. Hay and clover did well, and the small-fruit crop was encouraging, but all hemp and flax were wiped out by frost.

The autumn closed in with the original optimism of the farm officials clouded by many misgivings. There was little doubt as to the fertility of the soil, but it was becoming increasingly evident that the climate was not uniformly propitious.

Two Years of Siberian Doldrums

At the internment camp, 1918 and 1919 were long, monotonous years of toil and exile. Unrest among both troops and prisoners had been given a permanent quietus, and the camp entered on a weary period of hard work and interminable waiting.

In the spring of 1918 the Military Service Act took by draft all eligibles among the garrison. These young fellows, the cream of the guard, were replaced by draftees of lower categories sent from Toronto.

The population of the Compound grew steadily, through contributions from other camps and fresh internments in Winnipeg, Toronto and Montreal. In June, 1918, several new bunk-houses were built and the size of the Compound almost doubled. By the following winter some 1,200 prisoners were on the strength, those of German nationality being an overwhelming majority.

The news of the armistice in November, 1918, raised in Kapuskasing few echoes of the jubilation of Southern Ontario. For the terms of the truce left the disposal of enemy interns as far off as ever, and the mingling of hope with uncertainty made the long months of waiting doubly hard to bear. The sheer strain of monotony and confinement had an increasing effect on the mental condition of both troops and prisoners.

The minds of several of the former gave way, but as a rule such cases could be taken in time and sent back to civilization. The worst results were among the prisoners, where hope so often deferred at last took inevitable effect. In one fortnight early in 1919 six men had to be sent to asylums with mania or acute melancholia. The total contribution of internment camps to Canadian asylums was one hundred and eleven. These, too, were only the severe cases, and among the camp population there were few on whom the long years of captivity had not left their mark. This is not to the discredit of our Canadian administration, for the interns here were justly though strictly treated, and suffered none of the proven abuses inflicted in such German camps as Giessen in Hesse and Schohen in Westphalia, where there was no sanitation, wounds went undressed for weeks, legs were hacked off without anaesthetics, and starving prisoners were bayoneted and shot while trying to snatch garbage from swill-tubs. Yet confinement in a strange land, inactivity and hopeless waiting were in themselves enough to shatter the nerves and undermine the health.

And so the winter and spring dragged on with scarcely the sign of a change. Gloom only deepened as the weeks went by. Troops and prisoners cursed the delay and deliberations of the Congress of Versailles with all the fervour of a personal grievance. A flicker of interest was aroused by the Winnipeg "revolution," for thirty-three alien demagogues were spirited away from that distracted city and added to the camp strength. But the clouds at once closed over again, and utter weariness of spirit brooded over this subarctic limbo.

At last, early in July, 1919, word came that the Canadian government had decided to repatriate all interns. But now it was discovered that steamship accommodation was almost unobtainable. Only at long intervals could the repatriation parties leave Quebec for Rotterdam, Wesel, and home. The end did not come until February, 1920, fifteen months after the signing of the armistice. The camp buildings were sold by tender six weeks later, and were ultimately torn down by a Toronto house-wrecking company.

Further Record of the Federal Farm

Work on the Experimental Farm had continued to go for-

ward, but with none of the speed of 1915. During 1918 and 1919 the German interns had been loath to work more than was barely necessary for the provision of wood for the camp, and the stumping of slashed areas was often at a standstill through lack of labor. Frequently, too, when prisoners were willing to work, the depredations of the Military Service Act and the rawness of reinforcements prevented the camp from mustering enough competent escorts to take them to the farm. It was indeed a discouraging situation.

But more discouraging still was the weather during 1918. Incessant rains kept the land sodden all summer long, and hard frosts occurred in every month without exception. Garden truck was aborted. Turnips attained only the size of large radishes, and frequently were drowned out altogether. Half the potato plantings were killed by flooding, and the cutworms ruined the beets and cabbages. As before, hay and clover did well, but almost all the cereals were frozen while still in the milk. A few selected sheaves of fall wheat won golden opinions at the Toronto Exhibition, but before the rest of the crop could be brought in, foul weather made its harvesting a matter of salvage.

Official reports have not yet been published for 1919 and 1920, but it is generally understood that the crops in these years were much more encouraging.

The Demise of the Veterans' Colony

Major Kennedy, the first Superintendent of the Soldiers' Settlement Scheme, was succeeded in 1918 by Captain Fishwick, a Nova Scotian agricultural expert. A third and last superintendent, who took over in June, 1919, was Mr. H. E. Sheppard, a veteran from North Bay.

In the autumn of 1918 the Colony village included nineteen frame cottages, a dormitory, an administration building, a steam laundry, a smithy, a sawmill, a planing-mill, a store, and a school. Settlers, as already explained, were housed in the village while their individual lots and permanent homes were being made ready. Of the latter, sixty had been built.

Many concessions were made to the colonists. Lumber and groceries were furnished at cost. A well-equipped recreation room formed part of the dormitory. Seventy horses were

loaned to those clearing land. A clergyman supplied bi-weekly services without charge. Two qualified teachers were paid by the government, which also spent twenty-one dollars a day on vans to bring the children to and from school. And colonization roads had been constructed throughout the entire township.

But, strangely enough, all was not well. In October, 1919, Ontario underwent a change of government. On the 20th of January, 1920, the Honourable (Col.) C. Carmichael, Minister without Portfolio in the new Executive Council, presented his colleagues with an astonishing report on conditions in the Kapuskasing Colony. Apparently the settlement was now almost volcanic with grievances; many families faced an alternative of starvation or hopeless debt; and complaints were rife against officials of the supervising Department. The Drury government at once appointed a Commission, consisting of W. F. Nickle, K.C., Lieut.-Col. John I. McLaren, and Prof. John Sharp, to investigate the trouble. This Commission held sittings both in Toronto and at Kapuskasing, and on March 18, 1920, tabled their report in the Legislature.

This report corroborated many grievances. Clearings were insufficient even to provide fodder for a cow or a team of horses, and outside prices for hay were prohibitive. The market for pulp left much to be desired. Local employment, by which to eke out farming returns, was lacking. The climate had proved abominable, and almost all crops had been destroyed by frost.

But apart from hostile climate and inherent defects in the settlement scheme, there were other factors which the Commission declared responsible for the inability of the Colony folk to support themselves. Army life had tended to weaken initiative. The paternalism of the scheme had intensified that tendency. Too many were unfamiliar with the work of clearing land and not prepared to conform to the manner of life and the hard-working requirements of pioneering. "Most of them spent money much more lavishly than pioneer conditions warrant." Many, too, were suffering from physical and "temperamental" disabilities which unfitted them for the unremitting toil of the North Country.

In view of conditions, the Commission urged that the

whole colonization scheme be abandoned at once. It recommended that all who wished to leave the Colony should be given free transportation to any destination in Ontario, \$1,000 apiece for their cleared ten-acre plots, also the value of their houses and other buildings, \$50 the acre for all additional cleared land, the value of all timber cut but not delivered, and jobs at their respective destinations. Settlers who elected to remain on the scheme should, it was proposed, be rewarded by the gift of a horse and harness or \$450 in lieu, free grain for spring sowing, \$500 for slashing where their lots had no marketable timber, transfer, if desired, to better farms now vacated, and the salary of a school-teacher for at least two years. The entire plant of the Colony village was to be sold as soon as possible. These recommendations were at once adopted.

By January, 1920, the scheme had, in settling one hundred and one pioneers, cost the country eight hundred thousand dollars. A remnant of twenty have elected to remain. The cost of closing the colony has probably rounded out the deficit to a million dollars.

A Few Reflections

To stop here, leaving implied so much that is derogatory to the worth of the Clay Belt, would be unfair to this great region of the North. For its future promises much. Here are millions of acres of arable land, most of them exceedingly fertile. Clearing and thorough drainage will undoubtedly temper the climate. The great Archaean protaxis on its southern borders holds incalculable mineral wealth and will doubtless, in the course of Canada's development, support a large industrial population, whose mouths these farms of the north will help to fill. The *future* prosperity of the Clay Belt is assured, and will outdo assurance. But the present is hard, and the pioneers of this generation must be content to slave and toil as did our own forefathers in Southern Ontario a hundred years ago. Their children will receive a splendid heritage, but they themselves must be prepared to endure hardships all their days. The discipline of such frontier life is wholesome for a race; but few individuals are likely to assume it voluntarily while easier roads to success lie open elsewhere.

Yet it is possible that the Clay Belt may even yet be

cleared in our own time. While Anglo-Canadians are either avoiding or forsaking its cold forests, the French-Canadians—hard workers, expert woodsmen, and long habituated to the soil—are pouring in in ever increasing numbers. The birth rate in rural Quebec is twice that in rural Ontario, and the increase in population is rapid. The arable sections of rural Quebec are becoming too cramped, yet the French-Canadians are too conservative to make a clear leap to the far West, preferring to keep in close touch with the land and kinfolk of their upbringing. Hence their expansion has been that of a great and growing glacier, pushing out steadily and irresistibly into northern New Brunswick, the New England States, eastern Ontario, and now, especially, into the Clay Belt.

In this lies no cause for jealousy, no excuse for a “dog in the manger” attitude. Opening up New Ontario is a hard but patriotic task, and if the Anglo-Canadian of Ontario is unwilling to stoop his back to the ordeal, he should welcome the industry and enduring enterprise of his brother-citizen from Quebec. For we are all co-workers in the achievement of our national destiny; and it becomes more and more evident that the Clay Belt is to be colonized by the French-Canadian or not at all.

WATSON KIRKCONNELL.

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